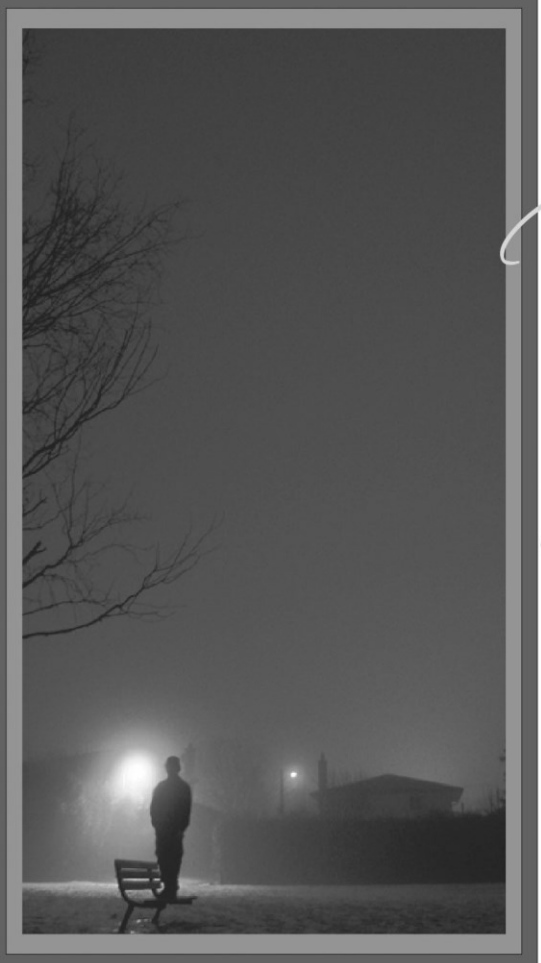

THE NIGHT SEASONS OF LIFE

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THE NIGHT SEASONS OF LIFE

Night Seasons

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1. Seasons Of Life

Life is a journey—a journey with many stages! All of us who were infants at one point in time, grew up to become children, and later reached those adolescent years that seemed almost endless! Then came adulthood. Many of us are married now and have children. The children will then grow up, leave home, and will move on to other stages in life. However, within each stage in life, there are various seasons. When we recollect our childhood years, most of us probably have happy memories of a lot of fun and ice cream! For some of us, the thought of our childhood may bring a sigh to our lips, as it may have been filled with strife and lack.

Seasons Of Life

We must realize that God has designed life to take place in seasons. We go through various seasons in life. The seasons in our lives keep changing. The book of Ecclesiastes brings out this truth vividly.

Ecclesiastes 3:1
To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven.

Ecclesiastes 3:11
He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.

We must realize that God does not work at random. He does not suddenly decide to implement something arbitrarily. God works according to "times" and "seasons." When Jesus was about to ascend into heaven, His disciples wanted to know if the kingdom would be restored to Israel at that time. *"They asked Him, saying, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times (chronos) or seasons (kairos) which the Father has put in His own authority"* (Acts 1:6-7). The Father has the times and seasons in His power.

'Chronos' And 'Kairos'

There are two Greek words that denote time. One word is *'chronos'* that refers to "duration" or "calendar time," and the other one is '*kairos*' that refers to the "right time," "opportune moment," or the "set time." God has the duration of time (*chronos*) and the right time (*kairos*) in His hands.

This is aptly illustrated in the Scriptures. *"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law"* (Galatians 4:4). When the fullness of time (chronos) came, God sent His Son into the world to reconcile man to Himself. When the "duration of time" is complete, then comes the "opportune time." In "the fullness of time," God sent His Son. That is the way God works. God is involved in the seasons of life on earth. It is God who changes times and seasons in the affairs of men on the earth.

God Changes The Times And Seasons

Daniel 2:21
And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.

God controls and influences the times and seasons on the earth. As believers, we are assured that the times and seasons of our lives are in His hands. We have this wonderful confidence and hope. *"My times are in Your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me"* (Psalm 31:15). The Hebrew word for "time" in Psalm 31:15 refers to the "now's" and the "when's" of our life. The "now's" and "when's" of our lives are in God's hands. He orchestrates their changes, as He sees fit. Some of us may be unduly anxious as to when we will get the right job, or whether we will get married to the right person. We must learn to rest in the assurance that the "when's" of our lives are in His hands. It takes wisdom to know and understand the seasons of life. We need to be sensitive to their changes and respond appropriately.

"He who keeps his command will experience nothing harmful; and a wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment" (Ecclesiastes 8:5). There is an appropriate time for each thing to be done and a right judgment that needs to be made. A wise man is one who can discern what to do and when to do it. 1 Chronicles 12:32 talks about the sons of Issachar who understood the times, to know what the nation of Israel was supposed to do. When we say that someone understands the times and seasons, we imply that the person knows what is supposed to be done at that moment in time. There is something specific that must be done in each season of life. If we were to find ourselves in a predicament and wonder what we are supposed to be doing, it would be wise to stop and assess what season of life we are in. For example, it would be ridiculous for someone who is in tenth grade to even consider marriage. Marriage is a good thing, but for a boy in tenth grade, this would be completely "out of season," and the wrong thing to do. There is something specific that must be done in each season of our lives. Every season has a reason, with specific tasks that need to be accomplished. Understand the season of life you are in, and do what needs to be done in that season.

2. THE NIGHT SEASONS OF LIFE

Characteristics Of The Night Season

We all go through various seasons in life. While we experience some wonderful seasons of life, we also go through periods of time that are not particularly wonderful. We can call those periods in our life "night seasons." All of us go through "days" and "nights." Here are some traits that characterize the night seasons.

Darkness

The night season of life is a season characterized by low visibility. The road ahead seems to be dark and bleak. Till very recently, the path may have seemed bright and clear but suddenly everything seems to be dark. The situation seems hopeless and the future seems unwelcoming. We are unable to decide the next course of action.

Stillness

Everything seems quiet, motionless, and still. Nothing seems to be happening. Despite all our prayers and seeking God, nothing seems to happen. All our prayers seem unanswered. All our efforts, to accomplish something, may seem in vain. We may have come to a point where we question whether our faith really works, as we speak the Word of God over our situations. We may even question God's presence because everything seems to have come to a standstill and there are long delays.

Loneliness

Loneliness seems to be a constant companion. It may seem like no one cares about us. No one seems to understand what we are going through. Life may be so lonely that we begin to wonder if God's promise, of always being with us, is true. God seems to be a million miles away!

Inner Turmoil

The night season can be a time of great searching and questioning. There may be several questions that trouble us, for which we are seeking answers. We may be faced with questions like: "When will I be promoted?" "How much longer do I have to wait before I get married?" "When will I find the right person to get married to?" A lot of questioning, searching, and seeking happens.

Obscurity

The night season is characterized by obscurity. We may have great talents, skills, and abilities, but are presently not recognized by many. We seem to be hidden away. No one knows us.

Consider the example of Moses. He was called to be the leader of the people of Israel but was tending sheep in the wilderness. Another example is that of David. He was called to be the king of Israel but was also tending sheep in the wilderness. Joseph was down in the prison. John the Baptist was called to be the forerunner of the Messiah but was in the wilderness eating locusts and honey. Nobody was even aware that he was there. However, John the Baptist never once questioned his presence in the wilderness, though he was supposed to be the forerunner of Jesus. Paul, who was called to be a great apostle, spent 13 years in obscurity.

3. Whence Cometh The Night?

As we continue to try and understand night seasons, we realize that we need answers for several questions. What causes the night seasons? When and how does it happen? As I reflect on my life and the night seasons that I have endured, I am able to point to at least four reasons as to why night seasons come.

The Lord Directs Our Way Into Such Seasons

Some of us may be in a night season because God led us into it. It may be that He has a purpose to it. The Bible talks about the steps of a good man being ordered by the Lord (Psalm 37:23). Consider the example of John the Baptist, discussed earlier in this book. John the Baptist who was called to be the forerunner of Jesus, spent several years of his life in the wilderness when no one knew what happened. He spent that time in the wilderness, until the time came for his revealing (Luke 1:80). The Lord seems to have been saying to John the Baptist, "Until my time comes, my place for you is in the wilderness." There is no record of John the Baptist questioning God's wisdom.

Consider the example of Apostle Paul who was on his way to Damascus, from Jerusalem. He saw a powerful light when he had an encounter with Jesus Christ. God saved him. God's call on his life was to be an apostle. Thereafter, he went to Damascus, received his sight, and began to preach about Christ (Acts 9:19–25). His life was in danger and he was on the run for three years, in the deserts of Arabia (Galatians 1:18). Later, he came to Jerusalem, met all the apostles, and talked to them about the wonderful revelations that he had received. Once again, his life was in danger and he was on the run again—only this time it was for a period of 13 years. Nobody knows the exact events that took place in his life during that period. All we know is that he who had formerly persecuted the Christians was later preaching Christ (Galatians 1:21–24). For 13 years, Paul was in Syria and Cilicia after which he came to Tarsus. Barnabas came from Antioch and found him. Barnabas brought him back to Antioch and from then on, for a year, Paul was teaching the Word (Acts 11:25-26). Later, he was launched as a missionary and into his apostolic ministry (Acts 13:2–4). So, from the time of his encounter with the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus to the time he was launched into his apostolic ministry—a period of about 17 years—there was hardly any record of what Paul did. Of course, we know that he must have been preaching and serving the Lord. Yet, the Lord did not find it significant enough for these to be recorded for us. These years of Paul are often referred to as the "silent years."

Some of us want to be associated with a prominent ministry immediately after we are saved, not being aware of God's working. Of course, God will honor our desire and zeal to work for Him but, sometimes, we make the mistake of assuming that we know everything! Even Apostle Paul, the man who was called to write two-thirds of the New Testament, and who had a lot of revelation, spent 17 years in obscurity. However, it was during those times that he received his revelation.

We Stumble In As A Result Of Our Own Actions/Decisions/Choices

Sometimes, we find ourselves in a night season because of the decisions we make. For instance, a student may have spent time doing things other than studying and ends up being unsuccessful in his exams. This would be a classic case of a night season in a student's life. Subsequently, he may have difficulty finding a job or progress in any direction. It would be totally inappropriate for this student to question God on why he was going through this period in his life. One should not conclude that God has "allowed" this to happen, because it was entirely the individual's doing. The student was supposed to have studied and succeeded in his exam. Had he done it, his life could have been entirely different. We cannot blame God for such occurrences. God has entrusted us with a free will and if we do not make wise decisions, God will not impose His will on us, just to prevent us from getting into a difficult period in our lives.

Consider another example from the Scriptures. Moses knew that he was called to be the deliverer of his people. But he made the mistake of presuming that his people would unanimously accept him as their leader. He went out in the self-assurance of having been equipped with the training that he received in Egypt. He saw a Hebrew and an Egyptian fighting. He tried to protect the Hebrew, and ended up killing the Egyptian. In another encounter, he saw two Hebrews fighting and when he tried to intervene, they asked him if they were going to face the same plight as the Egyptian. Moses ran away from the scene in fright and ended up being in the wilderness for 40 years. Now the question arises about whether God planned those 40 years. The answer is, "no." Moses found himself in the wilderness because of the mistakes he made. He stepped out of God's original plans. He tried to do things his own way. He knew for a fact that he was called to be the deliverer but wasn't patient enough to wait for God's timing and method. He tried to do things on his own and spent 40 years in the wilderness (Acts 7:20–30). God had to wait till the people who wanted to kill Moses died (Exodus 2:15,23).

Consider the Israelites whom God had brought to the edge of the land of Canaan, the land that He wanted them to inhabit. All that the Israelites were expected to do was send 12 people to spy on the land and formulate a strategy to occupy it. Ten of them came back with an evil report of unbelief. They were fearful of the people in Canaan and chose to disbelieve God, who had promised that they would inherit that land. They wanted to go back to Egypt. It is saddening to read how God responded to their unbelief and grumbling.

"Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valley; tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea" (Numbers 14:25).

God asked them to go back to the wilderness. They wound up being there for 40 years and none of the people, who were in disbelief, were allowed to enter the Promised Land. Again, we may wonder if it had been God's plan for them to be in the wilderness for 40 years. The answer again is, "no." They went there because of some choices that they made, which were contrary to God's instructions. However, it is comforting to note that God was constantly with them—guiding, protecting, and comforting them. It was true that God was not pleased with the way things turned out for them. What God wanted for them was the land of Canaan, that could have been occupied, but because of the wrong choices they made, they ended up spending a very long time in a place that was not part of God's plan for them. When we make decisions that take us in a direction that is not part of God's original plan for us, the Lord in His mercy continues to be with us, provides for us, teaches us, and leads us as we listen to Him, and He directs us back into His original plans and purposes.

The Actions Of Others Force Us Into Such Situations

Consider Joseph. His brothers became jealous of him and sold him as a slave. The transition from the comforts of his father's house to being a slave was all too sudden, for Joseph. It is not too difficult to imagine what Joseph would have gone through. He must have been bewildered at the different language and culture that he found himself in. He must have been wondering where God was in all of this. He would have questioned God's wisdom in giving him dreams when he found himself thrown into prison because of false allegations. Someone else's actions resulted in Joseph's predicament (Genesis 37). Consider David who was anointed to be king of Israel, but was a victim of Saul's intense jealousy. David was always on the run and hid in caves to protect himself from Saul, who intended to kill him (1 Samuel 22).

The Devil Comes Against Us With All Intensity

God functions according to times and seasons in our lives. It is interesting to observe that even the enemy comes against us with greater intensity in certain seasons, as compared to others. There may be seasons in our lives when we face intense attacks from the enemy and seasons when he recedes. Ephesians 6 advises us to stand firm in the evil day, after having done all. There will be times in our lives when we may go through what we can call "evil day" when the attacks of the devil will be very intense.

Ephesians 6:13
Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Luke 4:13
Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

When we observe the life of Jesus, there was a period of intense attack from the devil when He was fasting in the wilderness. This was followed by a time when Jesus was left alone. The enemy works like that. We may also go through certain seasons when we face intense onslaughts, and other times when they are not so intense.

A classic example of this is Job. In the book of Job, we observe God boasting to the devil that Job was a righteous and God-fearing man. Satan told God that Job was being faithful to God merely because God had blessed him with happiness, health, and prosperity. Satan challenged God to strip Job of everything, and then observe if Job continued to be pleasing in His sight. So, God merely allowed satan to destroy everything that Job had. It is satan who came against Job and destroyed his family, health, and material possessions. It was not God, but satan, who caused Job's suffering. Some people presume that it was God, when really it was not so.

As we read the book of Job, we know that it was not the Lord "taking away" but the devil who did the "taking away." But at that point in time, Job did not have the spiritual understanding to know what was really happening in the spirit realm. That is why he made the statement, *"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away"* (Job 1:21). Job spoke out of ignorance, because he did not know that it was the devil who was causing the destruction. He cannot be condemned of accusing God foolishly. We need to understand Job 1:21-22 in the light of all that has been stated from the beginning of the chapter. Job did not have the complete information that we have today. The book of Job is the oldest book in the Bible, and was written even before the Law of Moses was given to man. It was obviously written after Job endured the suffering. The writer of the book of Job (either Job, Moses, or someone else) obviously received a revelation of what took place in the spirit realm at a later point in time, when the book was being written. This was an understanding that Job most likely did not have when he encountered satan's works against him. This in no way diminishes Job's righteous life, sincerity, or dedication to God. However, today, we cannot feign ignorance about the things of God, because we have the complete Word of God and should not be making such a statement. The wonderful thing about Job is that he did not allow his heart to become bitter toward God. In fact, his commitment to God was absolute (Job 13:15). It is the cheerful endurance of Job that we are called to emulate (James 5:11), being assured of the good end that the Lord will bring about. At the end of the book of Job, we see that the Lord restored to Job twice as much as he had lost! The only time the Lord takes away is when we walk in deliberate sin and rebellion, as observed in Saul's life. God had given the kingdom to Saul. He disobeyed God. So, Samuel came to him and said that God was going to take away the kingdom and give it to somebody else (1 Samuel 15:22–28). We need to realize that God does not arbitrarily take away something from anyone. As a matter of fact, God is a "giving" God whose nature is to give generously as is evident in James 1:5.

4. Why Does The Night Come?

When I reflect on my life, I realize that there have been times in my life that really stand out as "night seasons." The period between January 1993 and September 1996, when I was in the USA, was a period of intense struggle. More recently, it was the time between December 2003 and January 2004, when my business was going through a difficult phase. I have been through my share of night seasons. As I look back and contemplate on these, I begin to understand why God allows the night seasons in our lives.

A Time For Teaching And Training

Psalm 16:7
I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel; My heart also instructs me in the night seasons.

Some of life's valuable lessons are learned when we go through difficult times—the night seasons. God does not always miraculously intervene, when we are in the midst of difficult situations. He would like us to learn some lessons and not allow ourselves to be in the midst of similar situations again. It is up to us to learn whatever there is to learn and become wiser. Some of us repeatedly put ourselves in such situations, and wonder why God is not doing anything on our behalf. Perhaps God is allowing us to go through these situations repeatedly, until we learn what we really need to learn. Until we learn those lessons that God is seeking to teach us, we cannot "graduate" or move on to the next season of life.

It is a time to learn from the mistakes we make and change appropriately. It is only fair that we be allowed to make mistakes but then we need to be wise enough not to repeat them. When a mistake is made, we need to learn from it, take necessary precautions, and try not to repeat it. When we enter into a period of darkness in our lives, let our attitudes not be one of despair. Let us not begin to question God about why it happened. Instead, let us discover what valuable lessons can be learned from the difficult situations. We will emerge victorious when we are confronted with a similar situation later in life.

Some of the important spiritual insights we learn are spoken to us in the night seasons. Jesus said, *"Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops"* (Matthew 10:27). Before we can stand on the housetop and preach, there ought to have been times when we spent listening to His whispers. It is often in the dark seasons of life that we learn valuable lessons. Although the following verses literally refer to nights, it is true that God speaks to us in the dark seasons of our lives.

Job 35:10
But no one says, 'Where is God my Maker, Who gives songs in the night.'

Many of the songs we sing in our lives are born in the night seasons of life.

A Time For Character Development

The night seasons of life are a time for character development. It is a time when God refines us and makes us mature.

Psalm 17:3
You have tested my heart; You have visited me in the night; You have tried me and have found nothing; I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.

Job 23:10
But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.

These verses have been a great source of encouragement to me. The words, "He knows the way that I take" should really encourage us. How is character developed? Not merely by going to Bible conferences! The Bible teaches us that tribulation produces endurance and endurance produces character. *"And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope"* (Romans 5:3-4). If we do not go through some tribulation and develop some endurance, we cannot be assured of a strong character.

God processes the weak things in our lives and changes them into strengths, during the night seasons that we go through. God converts our negatives into positives in the dark seasons of life.

A Time To Build Strength

It is usually during those dark seasons that we draw strength from God. David lived in obscurity tending sheep. God enabled David to kill the lion and the bear, while tending sheep (1 Samuel 17:34–37). It was during this time of obscurity, this night season of David's life, that he developed the confidence in God to face Goliath. The experiences God allows us to go through during the night seasons of life build us up, prepare us, and equip us for what he has in store. If David had detested taking care of sheep, he probably would not have encountered the lion and the bear and would not have had the opportunity to overpower them. God builds our strength in such times. The only way to become a mighty warrior is when some battles are fought. We cannot afford to be mighty warriors for God if we are reluctant to take on some battles. We cannot say, "God, do not allow the devil near me" and then desire to be a warrior for God. An effective way of

serving in God's army would be with some hands-on experience. How can we know victory without a battle? How can there be strength without a struggle? How can there be a testimony without a test? Let us be willing to take on the battles, so that we all will be able to stand up and testify, after successfully having gone through them.

A Time To Lay The Foundation

Mark 4:30–32
30 Then He said, "To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it?
31 It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth;
32 but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade."

The seed germinates while in the ground. There are certain changes taking place, although they may not be obvious to an observer. The night season in our lives can be compared to the germination period, when it may seem like nothing is happening. After a period of dormancy, the outer covering of the seed breaks out and gives rise to the root and shoot. The first part of Zechariah 4:10 says, *"For who has despised the day of small things?"* We must never despise the day of small beginnings. Looking back, I recollect that this church was started in the living room of my father's house, with just eight people, on 18 February 2001. Little did we realize then that we would have an auditorium filled with as many people as we do now! In God's Kingdom, great things usually have small beginnings. However, we must have the endurance to go through the germination period, the time of laying the foundation before we can step out of obscurity into visibility.

5. Where Is God When All Is Dark?

Psalm 121:4
Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep.

Psalm 74:16
The day is Yours, the night also is Yours; You have prepared the light and the sun.

Daniel 2:22
He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him.

Psalm 46:1-2
1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
2 Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.

Romans 8:35
Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

During the night seasons of life, God seems a million miles away and our minds usually question, "Where is God when I need Him the most?" God's Word is our only assurance. God's Word assures us that He does not slumber or sleep. God is not taking a break from working in your life!! God is still at work. The "night" and the "day" are the same to the Lord. He made them both. Even when you cannot seem to make any sense of what is going on, even when you cannot determine a way out of your night season, rest assured that He knows what is in the darkness. He's got the light. He knows the way out! God is a "very present help in trouble," which means He is present with you in the midst of your difficult situation. He is right there with you. There is no circumstance or situation that can ever separate you from the love that God has for you. His love for you is still as strong, as real, and as intense as on the day He gave His only Son to die for you. He doesn't love you any less today!

6. WHAT DO WE DO IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT?

Here are some things we can do as we go through the night seasons of life.

Keep Our Hearts Devoted To The Lord

Job made this powerful statement: *"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him"* (Job 13:15a). This should be the intensity of our commitment to the Lord. Even when Job did not understand the "why's" and the "when's" of what was happening to him, he had the strength to say*, "But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold"*(Job 23:10). Even when you don't understand everything, just stay faithful to the Lord! Keep your heart devoted to Him. Keep on loving Him, no matter what. The seasons of our lives may change, but God never does. So, let us be devoted to God.

Keep His Praises On Our Lips

Even though we may go through a hard time, let us not be seen with sad faces. God is still on the throne and deserves our praises, irrespective of whether we feel like praising Him or not. Habakkuk 3:17-18 says, *"Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation."* That would be the ultimate commitment to make! Joy is spelt j-o-y. We may be familiar with the saying that goes like this: "J" stands for "Jesus," "y" stands for "you," "o" is in the middle and stands for "nothing" too. Joy should only be dependent on the relationship between Jesus and you and not on your circumstances. Joy should be a reality in our lives, even when there is nothing except our relationship with our Savior.

"I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Psalm 34:1).We need to praise the Lord not merely when we go through good times, but always. We need to bless God when we go through hard times also. Let us make a commitment that we will praise God, the most, when we go through the hardest of times.

Live Out What Was Learned

The acid test of who we really are, what we firmly believe in, and what we are really made of is seen, not in the nice and easy seasons but in the difficult and tough seasons of life.

It is the fire that tests and proves what we are really made of. It is not too difficult to say, "Hallelujah" and "Praise the Lord" when all is well. It would be interesting to see what words we speak, when we are in a difficult situation. Let us not just be hearers of the Word but be doers, as James 1:22 points out. Here are some practical suggestions to live out what we have learned.

Hold Fast To Our Faith And Confession

Hebrews 10:23
Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

Hold fast! He is faithful! Before I left for USA, I was teaching people in India about faith, God's goodness, and His willingness and ability to heal. I also ministered to people in faith. Almost immediately after I reached USA, I realized that it was not the land "flowing with milk and honey," as I had imagined it to be! Instead, I entered a phase in my life that was to be one of the darkest periods of my life. There were times when I did not have money to buy food and eat. Nevertheless, during that period of my life, I did not change my theology, to suit my experience. In fact, I held on even more to the Word of God then. I still believed that the Lord was my Shepherd and that I would not be in want. I still believed that my God would supply all my needs, according to His riches in glory. I still chose to believe that whatever I do will prosper. My circumstances may have been bad, but the Scripture is true. So, I held on to the Word of God and said, "I believe this is the Word of God and that it will come to pass."

As I continued believing God's Word, I began to see things happening in my life and God lifted me up gradually. I used to envisage myself coming back to India and raising up strong churches that would impact the nations, even when I had nothing in my life. The only thing that made a difference was the Word of God. So, if today someone were to raise any doubts about teaching "faith" and questioned whether "faith in God" really works, I would answer, "definitely." I have lived out these principles in my life. It has been proved to be true. It is not as if I learned these principles theoretically in a Bible college or by reading a book. I have lived them out in my life. If someone were to question me about why I teach "prosperity," and try to convince me otherwise, I would not be convinced. I have experienced God's faithfulness to His Word in "provision." His Word is true. This is what you must do when you go through your night season—hold fast to your confession of faith.

Fight The Good Fight Of Faith

1 Timothy 6:12
Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

The walk of faith is called a "fight." We are told to "fight the good fight of faith." If we are in a fight, it is obvious that there are enemies that we are up against. We are in a good fight—a fight worth fighting for. So do not quit during the fight—even when the battle gets intense. Keep fighting the good fight of faith.

Guard Our Hearts

Let us guard our hearts from ill feelings. It is during these times that we may begin to develop ill feelings toward God and toward other people. We may get angry with God, our pastor, neighbors, and even ourselves. We may develop bitter feelings. If we ignore the warning from Scripture and allow ill feelings to invade us, we will be the ones most affected. *"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life"* (Proverbs 4:23). Our lives will be determined by what is in our hearts, so we need to guard our hearts. Joseph is a great example in this regard. Joseph was sold as a slave to Egypt by his brothers and after their father's death, his brothers were fearful of Joseph's reaction to their earlier action. Joseph was totally forgiving and had no ill feeling toward his brothers, because he was able to see the big picture.

Genesis 50:19-20
19 Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?
20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

Develop Endurance

Psalm 40:1–3
1 I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry.
2 He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps.
3 He has put a new song in my mouth—Praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD.

Develop endurance as you go through life's struggles. When I was going through a hard time, Psalm 40:1–3 offered me the strength and encouragement I needed. I knew that I would come out of the "pit." Although I did not know when, I was sure that God would lift me up. There were times when I used to go through my dark seasons envisioning what God wanted me to do and what He wanted me to become, even though at that point in time, there was nothing. I endured the difficult circumstances because of the joy that I knew was set before me.

James 5:10-11
10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.
11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

Hebrews 12:2
Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Look at the patience of the prophets as mentioned in James. Consider Job who was patient through all his troubles. You just need to hold on with patience. Jesus saw the joy that was set before him and endured the cross. Keep the vision God has given you. Even when it seems impossible, renew, and refresh the vision God has given you. Let the thought of seeing that vision fulfilled, keep you pressing on through the night seasons along the way.

We Will Not Always Have All the Answers

Deuteronomy 29:29
The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Most of us have a tendency to get so fixated on questions for which we will never get answers on this side of heaven. God is not obligated to answer all our questions. He has given us all that we need to know in the Scripture. During the night seasons of life, there may be many questions that we could ask—many of them might just remain unanswered. However, don't let an unanswered question bring your life to a screeching halt. Get on with it! You will have your answers when you get to heaven. For now, just run your race to the finish. There are times when we need to stop asking, "why?" and just get on with God's plan!

Stay Faithful To The Call Of God, Keep Working

1 Corinthians 15:58
Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

2 Timothy 4:2
Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

Just because we are going through a night season or a difficult time in life, it does not mean that we should totally withdraw from the call of God on our lives. Some of us are in the habit of serving God only when it is easy. When life gets a little difficult, we withdraw from all involvement in ministry, and get into our own shell of self. We don't care about others. It appears that our commitment to the call of God on our lives is dependent on the circumstances rather than a "heart-response" to a "heavenly calling." Instead, stay faithful to the call of God regardless of the season of life you are in. Regardless of the season of life you are in, do what God wants you to do. Don't be a "yo-yo" Christian,

sometimes up and sometimes down. The fruit of the Spirit is temperance or self-control—the ability to be consistent, regardless of circumstances or situations!

Learn The Lessons, Make Needed Changes, Wise Up

There are specific lessons to be learned, specific changes that need to be made in our lives—our character, conduct, and the way we order ourselves. Until we learn these and make the changes—until we come to the maturity and stage of ripening—our season will not change.

Most of us do not have any difficulty realizing that we are in the midst of a night season, but we often tend to question when the morning will dawn. We are curious as to what must be done to hasten the dawn. We need to understand that God does not perceive time the way we do. We usually want God to intervene and change our mourning into dancing immediately. However, God's perception of time is very different from ours.

2 Peter 3:8
But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Psalm 90:4
For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.

God Will Wait Until We Make Necessary Changes

Isaiah 58:6–11
6 Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?
7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?
8 Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.
9 Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,
10 if you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday.
11 The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

When we remain stubborn and unwilling to make necessary changes in our lives, the night season gets longer and the breaking forth of the morning is delayed.

In the Scripture passage quoted above, the word, "then" is very significant. *"Then your light shall break forth like the morning."* When? After the individual does what God has required of him. Stop wickedness, stop oppression, feed the hungry, and take care of the

needy and not hide from those in need.

As we see in Scripture, the '*kairos'* or fullness of time is a coming together of things that God desires in the life of the individual and in situations surrounding the individual. God can easily align things that surround us (people, places, and things around us). He also waits till things in us (our heart attitudes, our character, our relationships with people, and the like) come in alignment to what He desires. The sooner we change and come in alignment to His will, plan, and purpose, the sooner we can transition into the next season of life.

The Way You Entered Will Determine The Way You Exit

- If God brought you in, God would bring you out.
- If you stepped in because of your own foolishness, then you need to make some changes and learn your lesson before you come out of it. Reverse your foolishness.
- If people pushed you in, God would use people to pull you out! Consider the case of Joseph who was pushed into prison by Potiphar's wife. God used a butler to get him out.
- If the enemy has come against you with intensity and you stand your ground, then the same enemy will run from you.

Be Of Good Cheer

I want to conclude with this wonderful passage from the Scripture that gives us hope in our night seasons. This passage was a great encouragement to me when I was going through my night seasons.

Genesis 41:51-52
51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house."
52 And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

After Joseph was made Prime Minister, he had two children. The first one was named Manasseh and the second, Ephraim. The meanings of both their names were significant in the light of what Joseph had endured in his life. God can make you fruitful in the land where you may have suffered (Genesis 41:51-52). Amen! That is the way God works. You may be going through a hard time and are anxious that you may have emotional scars because of what you are going through. Be encouraged that the God of the Bible promises to erase even the memories of your struggles. Isn't that amazing! We do serve an amazing God. Today, when I look back at the difficult times that I endured, I can thank God for the lessons that I learned and for the valuable truths that He shared with me. Some of the books that I was able to write, like, "The Refiner's fire" and "A time for every purpose,"

were because of the lessons I learned when I was going through a difficult season in my life.

Psalm 30:5
For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.

Psalm 30:11-12
11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,
12 To the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.

Psalm 102:13
You will arise and have mercy on Zion; For the time to favor her, Yes, the set time, has come.

Morning will come! We may weep through the night but let us be assured that there WILL be a dawn (Psalm 30:5). God is able, and more than willing, to turn our mourning into dancing. He will put off our sackcloth and clothe us with gladness (Psalm 30:11-12). God can do it. Have faith in His Word. When the "set time" in your life comes, God will not fail to show favor. But until that time comes, we are called to wait and not lose hope. Do not make the mistake of running away from a difficult situation thinking that it will be brighter elsewhere. Wait for God's timing and do not run ahead of God. Learn your lessons quickly and allow God's favor to reach you. The time to favor you will come!

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All Peoples Church ministers beyond its own borders as a local church by reaching out all across India, especially North India, with a special focus on (A) Strengthening Leaders, (B) Equipping young people for ministry and (C) Building up the Body of Christ. Several training seminars for young people, and Christian Leaders conferences are held throughout the year. In addition, several thousands of copies of publications are distributed free of cost in English and other Indian languages with the purpose of equipping believers in the Word and in the Spirit.

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About All Peoples Church

At All Peoples Church (APC), our vision is to be salt and light in the city of Bangalore and a voice to the nation of India and to the nations of the world.

At APC, we are committed to presenting the complete, uncompromised Word of God in the anointing and demonstration of His Holy Spirit. We believe that good music, creative presentations, brilliant apologetics, contemporary ministry techniques, latest technology, and so on, can never substitute the God-ordained approach of proclaiming the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4-5; Hebrews 2:3-4). Our theme is Jesus, our content is the Word, our method is Holy Spirit power, our passion is people, and our goal is Christlike maturity.

With our main base in Bangalore, All Peoples Church has several other church locations in India. To get a current listing and contact information of All Peoples Church locations, please visit our website at **www.apcwo.org/locations** or send an email to **contact@apcwo.org**.

DO YOU KNOW THE GOD WHO LOVES YOU?

About 2000 years ago, God came into this world as a man. His name is Jesus. He lived a perfectly sinless life. Since Jesus was God in flesh, everything He said and did revealed God to us. The words He spoke were the very words of God. The things He did were the actions of God. Jesus did many miracles on the Earth. He healed the sick and suffering. He opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, made the lame to walk and healed every kind of sickness and disease. He fed the hungry by miraculously multiplying a few loaves of bread, calmed the storm and did many other wonderful things.

All of these actions reveal to us that God is a good God who wants people to be well, whole, healthy, and happy. God wants to meet the needs of people.

So why then would God decide to become a man and step into our world? Why did Jesus come?

All of us have sinned and done things that are unacceptable before the God who created us. Sin has its consequences. Sin is like a great unsurpassable wall between God and us. Sin separates us from God. It prevents us from knowing and having a meaningful relationship with the One who created us. Therefore, many of us try to fill this void with other things.

Another consequence of our sins is eternal separation from God. In God's court, the penalty for sin is death. Death is eternal separation from God in hell.

But the good news is that we can be free from sin and be restored to God. The Bible says, *"***For the wages [payment] of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 6:23).** Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world when He died on the cross. Then, three days later He rose again, showed Himself alive to many and then went back into heaven.

God is a God of love and mercy. He does not wish that any person be lost in hell. And so He came, to provide a way for the entire human race to be free from sin and its lasting consequences. He came to save sinners—to rescue people like you and me from sin and eternal death.

To receive this free forgiveness of sins, the Bible tells us that we have to do just one thing—accept what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross and to believe in Him whole-heartedly.

"… through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43).

… "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

You too can receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins if you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is a simple prayer to help you make a decision to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for you on the cross. This prayer will help you express your acceptance of what Jesus has done for you and receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins. This prayer is only a guideline. You can also pray in your own words.

Dear Lord Jesus, today, I have understood what You did for me on the cross. You died for me, you shed Your precious blood and paid the penalty for my sins, so that I could be forgiven. The Bible tells me that whoever believes in You will receive forgiveness for their sins.

Today, I make a decision to believe in You and to accept what You did for me, by dying for me on the cross and rising again from the dead. I know I cannot save myself by my own good works, neither can any other human save me. I cannot earn forgiveness for my sins.

Today, I believe in my heart and say with my mouth that You died for me, You paid the penalty for my sins, You rose again from the dead, and by faith in You, I receive forgiveness and cleansing for my sins..

Thank You Jesus. Help me to love You, to know You more and to be faithful to You.
Amen.

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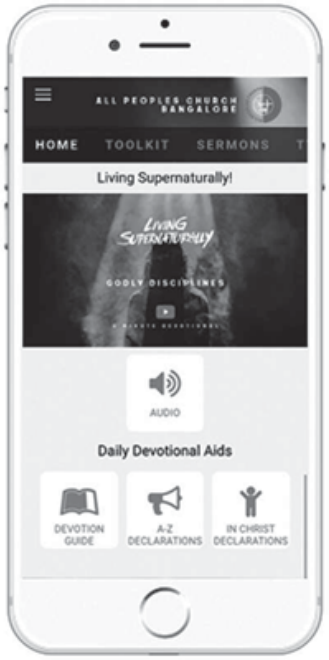

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APC-BC is accredited by the Nations Association for Theological Accreditation (NATA).

We experience different seasons of life in each stage of our life. Amidst some of the wonderful seasons of our life, we may go through periods of time that we can call 'night seasons.' As we try and understand 'night seasons,' we realize that we need answers for several questions–What causes the night seasons? How does it happen? Why does the night come? What do I do in the midst of darkness? When will the morning dawn?

This book answers these questions and encourages us to have the right attitude in the midst of difficult circumstances because of the hope that we have in Christ. Sorrow may last for the night but joy comes in the morning!

Ashish Raichur

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